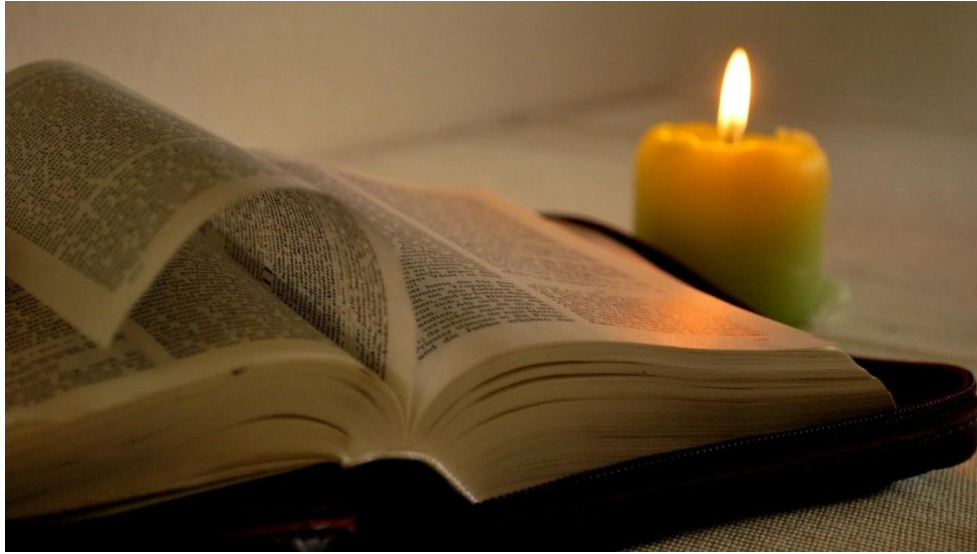




Cal State Fullerton Business Grad Kim Riddlebarger '77 Examines the Most Common Christian View of Bible Prophecy

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From the earliest Christians to today's Protestant, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox believers, the visible and literal Second Coming of Jesus Christ has always been an essential doctrine and hope of the church. New Testament passages such as John 5:28-29, John 14:1-3, Acts 1:11, I Thessalonians 4:16-17 and Hebrews 9:27-28 make clear that the return of Jesus is a pivotal future event in the history of our world. This hope is repeated in the Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed, statements of faith used throughout Christendom.

While Christians have always agreed *that* Jesus will return, there has been disagreement about the *when* of His coming and *what conditions* will be like on the earth at that time.

A common American view in recent years focuses on a complex futurist scenario beginning with a pre-tribulation rapture and culminating with a millennial kingdom that is halfway between perfection and today's world. This view tends to be headline-driven and is rapidly changeable based on current events. In liberal circles, preterism, believing that some or all the end times events have already occurred, is a popular explanation.

But throughout church history – and especially between the years A.D. 500 and 1800 – the most common perspective has been amillennialism.

Instead of focusing on some future intermediate golden age before eternity, amillenarians hold that we have been living in the last days of human history since Jesus ascended into Heaven and the next events on the prophetic calendar are the simultaneous resurrection of the dead, final judgment, and establishment of the new heaven and new earth.

Kim Riddlebarger, a 1977 business graduate of Cal State Fullerton, is one of the leading apologists for the amillennial viewpoint in the Christian church today. He is pastor emeritus of Christ Reformed Church in Anaheim and was co-host of the White Horse Inn radio program and podcast for more than 25 years. Riddlebarger is the author of the book [*A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times*](#), which seeks to understand Bible prophecy not according to the latest headlines or the lenses of skeptical higher criticism but as the historic Christian church has understood it.

I had the privilege of asking Riddlebarger a bit about amillennialism and his understanding of future events that are centered on the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



Kim Riddlebarger, the 1977 Cal State Fullerton business grad most renowned for his apologetic support of amillennialism, the most common Christian view of the end times.

Premillennialism, amillennialism and postmillennialism can be such confusing terms for most people. What do these words mean in practice and why does it matter?

Premillennialism is the view that after Jesus returns, He will establish a physical kingdom on the earth. Premillennialists disagree among themselves about the nature of that kingdom. Several prominent Early Church Fathers held to a premillennial view. In the last two centuries, there has been a revival of premillennialism, mostly the dispensational variety. The common American view has been dispensational premillennial futurism, which holds that the removal of the church would be followed by a terrible seven-year period of judgment and persecution before Christ returns to set up an earthly kingdom. But the dominance of this view is beginning to fade.

Postmillennial Christians hold that the so-called millennial age occurs before Christ returns. There are several varieties of postmillennialism. The first is a secular view which expects some sort of progressive utopia in humanity's future (the "social gospel"). A second view is so-called evangelical postmillennialism, which sees the gospel spreading to the ends of the earth and the nations converting to Christianity. This was a view held by many Puritans, including Jonathan Edwards, and was popular in early America in the era of the Founding Fathers. A third variety of postmillennialism (theonomic postmillennialism) seeks to bring the nations into submission to the law of God as was the case in Ancient Israel. This view has gained some popularity of late with the rise of Christian nationalism.

Amillennialism, a term coined early in the 20th century, is what I believe. It is now regarded as a distinct form of postmillennialism in that it expects the millennial age before Christ's return. However, amillennialists see the millennial age as a present reality running from Christ's first advent until His return, not a future golden age as in the other versions of postmillennialism. Amillennialism was the view of Augustine, the Reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin, and those confessional Protestant churches which descend from them, such as the Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian and Anglican denominations.



A chart summary of the "two-age model" that Riddlebarger and other amillennialists hold to, which is much simpler than more complex Christian eschatological views.

You hold to a "two-age model," a simplified view of the present and future. Perhaps Martin Luther summarized this understanding in his famous quote, "There are two days in my calendar: this day and that Day." How does the Bible support a two-age model? And what impact does the two-age model have on our personal lives?

The two-age model is grounded in the common New Testament usage of the terminology and the contrast between two ages or realms. "This age" spoken of by Jesus and the Apostle Paul refers to the ordinary course of human history. It is associated with temporal things. The "age to come," on the other hand, refers to eternal things and is associated with the new creation which dawns after Jesus' resurrection. Both the term and idea are found widely in the New Testament. Christians often speak of currently possessing eternal life even while still living in this present age. When Christ returns, all things temporal give way to eternal things, most notably resurrected bodies and new heaven and earth. This gives Christians an eternal perspective on temporal things, and a solid hope for the future grounded in Jesus Christ's bodily resurrection. As surely as Jesus was raised from the dead so too, we will be raised. Paul even speaks of the indwelling Holy Spirit being the guarantee that this will come to pass (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Amillennialists emphasize Jesus' words that no one knows the day or hour of Christ's return (Matthew 24:36). Yet you do believe there are some events that will happen on earth prior to Jesus' return. What do you see prophetically in the world's future?

I hold that the Bible teaches that there are three things left to be fulfilled in addition to those general signs which have been present since the days of Jesus, which include earthquakes, famines, pandemics and wars.

The first is that the **gospel must be preached to all the earth** (Matthew 24:14). The second is that **Israel (defined as the vast number of Jews living at the end of the age) will embrace Jesus as their promised Messiah** (Romans 9-11). Finally, the arch-foe of Jesus and His people, **the final Antichrist, will appear at the time of the end** (II Thessalonians 2:1-12). This Antichrist will mirror the claims to deity the Caesars used in the First Century Roman Empire and will use state power and economic coercion to force the world to deny Christ and instead direct their worship and allegiance to him and the state he rules. When a Christian confesses that Jesus is Lord, they are simultaneously affirming that Caesar (or any geopolitical leader) is not. Christianity has always been subversive in that sense.

You are both a graduate of my alma mater, Cal State Fullerton, and a Titan parent, as your adult son graduated from CSUF. What are the highlights of your Titan journey?

I decided upon Cal State Fullerton because the College of Business and Economics had a very high national rating and tuition was very reasonable. I planned on running my family's business but needed the tools to do so. Although my career would unexpectedly take me into graduate studies in theology, history, and philosophy, my time at CSUF served me well. When I unexpectedly entered the ministry, the management, organization, and accounting skills I had picked up along the way enabled me to work closely with church elders, nonprofit directors, and academic administrators. I had previous experience handling human resources matters, balancing the books, scheduling employees, and planning special events, all of which was invaluable over the course of my subsequent career as a pastor and professor at Westminster Seminary in Escondido, California.

For more on Riddlebarger's theological works, consult his main book on amillennialism as well as his 2006 book, *[The Man of Sin: Uncovering the Truth About the Antichrist](#)*, which examines the Biblical doctrine of the Antichrist as both a past and present reality of anti-Christian world leaders but also an ultimate future manifestation that will immediately precede the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Whether or not you agree with Riddlebarger's more simplified view of Bible prophecy, all Christians can appreciate the amillennial emphasis that Jesus Christ is already the Victor in the spiritual battle, and we look forward to the ultimate final manifestation in Christ's return and an eternity with our Lord.

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